

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
HOUSE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON MILITARY AND VETERANS' AFFAIRS

March 21, 2017

1:02 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Representative Chris Tuck, Chair
Representative Gabrielle LeDoux, Vice Chair
Representative Justin Parish
Representative Ivy Spohnholz
Representative George Rauscher
Representative Lora Reinbold
Representative Dan Saddler

MEMBERS ABSENT

All members present

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

PRESENTATION: ALASKA FORGET ME NOT COALITION

HOUSE BILL NO. 165

"An Act relating to hiring for positions in state service based on substitution of military work experience or training for civilian work experience or training requirements."

- HEARD & HELD

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

BILL: HB 165

SHORT TITLE: STATE PERSONNEL ACT: VETERANS

SPONSOR(s): REPRESENTATIVE(s) PARISH

03/08/17	(H)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
03/08/17	(H)	MLV, STA
03/16/17	(H)	MLV AT 1:00 PM GRUENBERG 120
03/16/17	(H)	-- MEETING CANCELED --
03/21/17	(H)	MLV AT 1:00 PM GRUENBERG 120

WITNESS REGISTER

VERDIE BOWEN, Director of Veterans Affairs
Office of Veteran Affairs
Department of Military & Veterans' Affairs (DMVA)

Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Gave a presentation on the Alaska Forget Me Not Coalition.

OCTAVIA THOMPSON, State Family Program Director

Alaska National Guard

Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson (JBER), Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Offered information and answered questions during the presentation on the Alaska Forget Me Not Coalition.

MAGEN JAMES, State Community Support Coordinator

Army OneSource

Anchorage, Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Answered questions during the presentation on the Alaska Forget Me Not Coalition.

ROBERT EDWARDSON, Staff

Representative Justin Parish

Alaska State Legislature

Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Explained HB 165 to the committee, on behalf of Representative Parish, prime sponsor.

DAN WAYNE, Attorney

Legislative Legal Counsel

Legislative Legal and Research Services

Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Answered questions regarding HB 165.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[1:02:41 PM](#)

CHAIR CHRIS TUCK called the House Special Committee on Military and Veterans' Affairs meeting to order at 1:02 p.m. Representatives Reinbold, Spohnholz, Parish, Rauscher, and Tuck were present at the call to order. Representatives Saddler and LeDoux arrived as the meeting was in progress.

PRESENTATION: ALASKA FORGET ME NOT COALITION

[1:04:08 PM](#)

CHAIR TUCK announced that the first order of business would be a presentation by the Alaska Forget Me Not Coalition.

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VERDIE BOWEN, Director of Veterans Affairs, Office of Veteran Affairs, Department of Military & Veterans' Affairs (DMVA), gave a presentation on the Alaska Forget Me Not Coalition. He stated that the coalition will reflect the heart of the community in serving active military, veterans, and their families. The coalition started under a mental health and substance abuse grant received several years ago. When the federal funds were gone, the program continued mostly through volunteers and through some small funds from the Office of Veteran Affairs.

MR. BOWEN stated that the vision of the coalition is for Alaska's service members, veterans, and families to be supported and cared for within their communities. He referenced slide 2 in a PowerPoint presentation [included in the committee packet]. The mission of the program is to educate, inform, and to link Alaskan communities, service members, veterans, and their families to ensure a healthy future. He explained that the coalition is the local vehicle that helps veterans "reach into" programs. Sometimes in Alaska, veterans and their family members have issues. For example, the coalition was contacted regarding a veteran who was out of stove oil in the middle of winter and unable to heat his/her home. He stated that Catholic Social Services (CSS) had received a large grant and was able to help that veteran right away. To reach some of the programs available, veterans must know those programs exist. He stated that is virtually the role of the Alaska Forget Me Not Coalition. He remarked, "It allows us to look at all of the programs that are out there that provide services to the military and the veterans and their families."

MR. BOWEN drew attention to slide 3 and stated that the coalition's focus is on community outreach & education, statewide coordination and collaboration, and strategic partnerships. The coalition's structure is a steering committee, with alliances under the steering committee. He explained that he and Ms. Octavia Thompson are part of the committee. He added that the [U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs] (VA) came out with a community partnership called "My VA," which is another aspect of the coalition. He stated that under the "My VA" program, the coalition has extended the service within the program. He remarked:

So, if you come to one of our ... board meetings, you will see suicide awareness from the VA, you'll see the director from the local VA healthcare there, as well as several other members from the VA to help us reach

into not only local community services but also back into the VA for those ... [active] military and veterans as well.

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OCTAVIA THOMPSON, State Family Program Director, Alaska National Guard, added that the [My VA] program is part of the effort brought forth by former First Lady Michelle Obama and Jill Biden to join community forces with the National Guard and the active duty services. It aims to ensure there are services throughout communities, so when members are home after deployment, they have access to resources in central locations. However, some Alaska National Guard members might live in rural villages without the same access to resources. She remarked, "Part of that joining community forces is to work with the communities to make sure that we can get the services to our returning veterans, as well."

MR. BOWEN referred to slide 4 and stated that coalition goals are to: Establish Alaska Forget Me Not Coalition as the leading coalition on issues concerning military, veterans, and their families; expand resource sharing and services for military, veterans, and their families in rural Alaska; develop and maintain functional website for service providers and military, veterans, and their families; and create and maintain a marketing plan for coalition activities.

MR. BOWEN noted that some of the biggest problems are that one 501(c) may do similar work as another 501(c) or there might be a gap in the services it provides and someone else might be able to offer separate services. He explained that most 501(c) businesses are funded through granting authorities.

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MR. BOWEN listed some key partners of the Alaska Forget Me Not Coalition found on slide 5: Alaska Legal Services Corporation; the Department of Military & Veterans' Affairs and Alaska National Guard, Family Programs; the Army OneSource; the Better Business Bureau; the Employer Support of the Guard & Reserve; the North Star Behavioral Hospital; University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF) Cooperative Extension Service; U.S. Department of Labor's Veterans' Employment and Training Service; and the VA Health [Administration].

MR. BOWEN explained that there are specific alliances designed within the partnership. The behavioral health alliance, found on slide 6, has quarterly, in-person, training opportunities for service providers. The alliance tries to provide continuing education credits at the highest accreditation level to people in rural communities to keep valid licensing. He stated that there are over 500 free subject matter experts provided in Alaska and 250 free subject matter experts in military culture training. He added that there are also free online trainings provided by partners. He noted that this is provided at no cost to the military, veterans, or family members; it is provided by partnerships. He communicated that one such partnership with the Department of Health and Social Services has a federal grant which provides free education on post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), military sexual trauma (MST), and traumatic brain injuries (TBI).

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MS. THOMPSON added that Southcentral Foundation provided space for the coalition to offer training, and over 75 participants attended. She said the event went very well and the coalition was able to discuss military culture and offer understanding of what military personnel go through and how they are economically affected.

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REPRESENTATIVE REINBOLD indicated that she watched a video about a Navy Seal, [Anthony] Lembo, who dealt with PTSD and committed suicide. She said that the video has had 23 million views since September 10. She added that there is a related website, activeheros.org. She asked if the Alaska Forget Me Not Coalition can help this organization. She asked if there is anything the committee members can do to increase awareness. She said that the reason the Navy Seal committed suicide was because he was going to lose his security clearance if he asked for help. She asked whether it is true that individuals might lose security clearance if they go for help.

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MR. BOWEN answered that it was true in the past. He explained that previously within the military, if an individual had a high security clearance and signed into mental health [services], then his/her security clearance was immediately suspended until he/she completed [treatment]. Often, such individuals were

removed from their work area and were put in a job-controlled training environment. He stated that since that time, which he speculated was about 10 years ago, the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) has taken great strides to provide services to the active duty military and National Guard to provide them with the ability to come out and say, "I am having difficulties with this issue."

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REPRESENTATIVE REINBOLD stated that [Anthony's death] occurred in 2010. She remarked:

If it was 10 years ago, then there's some flaw somewhere here in the data. Also, a lot of people are posting boldly under my Facebook, because I posted this, and it's gotten tons of views - I'm just amazed - in the last couple days. And they say, "Oh yeah, it's still a problem, and the military does not treat people right." They start questioning them and treating them poorly if they say that they have ... PTSD. So, I really want this to be addressed.

MR. BOWEN responded that he understands Representative Reinbold's concerns; he spent 23 years in the military with a high security clearance. He stated that he understands the issues of PTSD and what is perceived by the military member as well. He remarked:

You have to envision the culture in which we're raised in. First of all, we're tough; we stand alone; we do things alone. And so, a lot of times when things approach us that are causing us grave issues, we don't ask people for help. That's one of the biggest flaws that we have within the system, because the moment we have a veteran that has an issue, a lot of times they will not ask for help. ... They won't because they take it as a form of weakness The issue is ... that you have to break that culture on order for people to openly come out and say, "I have an issue."

MR. BOWEN acknowledged that this is a current issue within the military. He attributed it to raising a lean, mean, fighting, machine force; and that "force" admitting to having issues because of something that happened during a deployment causes service members stress.

MR. BOWEN drew attention to a book about PTSD, which he had passed around to committee members, [entitled "Tears of a Warrior: A Family's Story of Combat and Living with PTSD"]. He stated that his office provides such books throughout the state to military members and their family members. He remarked, "As they read through those books, they discover some of the changes that happen, so they can identify whether there's PTSD that's evident."

MR. BOWEN explained that individuals with PTSD who were deployed for a long time - 9 to 15 months - have trouble when returning home. A lot of things have happened to them, but they often believe that time has stood still at home. He counseled that when such individuals come home after they have experienced personal changes, they may have difficulty reintegrating back into family life. He offered that their spouses and the people around them will recognize their issues, while the individuals believe "that is the new norm." He explained that it can be difficult to identify PTSD because the individuals who have PTSD may not know it themselves because of the other changes and experiences they have had.

MR. BOWEN said that the book he passed around describes some issues faced by the Seahorn family, and the book is written to be a guide for veterans. He mentioned that the book started as a way for the family members to understand what their dad had experienced in Vietnam. He indicated that the book identifies some of the progress and limitations of PTSD.

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MR. BOWEN returned to the presentation, slide 7. He mentioned the financial/transition/employment alliance which offers: regularly scheduled employment fairs; financial literacy training programs both in-person and online; Military Saves Week; and transition assistance programs. He explained that there are many different programs to try and limit stressors that are caused by transitions in military service. He said that as people transition back to the civilian world, there are many unknowns. He offered that the coalition aims to lessen stress in transitions. He described that transition assistance programs have been successful because they are now mandatory.

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REPRESENTATIVE SPOHNHOLZ asked what Military Saves Week is.

MS. THOMPSON answered that the event is on the active duty side to raise awareness [of financial resources], similar to a sexual assault awareness month. She added that there is also a "military saves program" which looks at financial resources both during service and planning for retirement. She expressed that she is working with the National Guard Bureau to get a contracted personal financial counselor to work with soldiers and airmen on the new retirement system that has been implemented. She stated that the National Guard Bureau is having difficulty recruiting contracted personal financial counselors to serve Alaska for the National Guard and active duty.

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MR. BOWEN drew attention to slide 8, which discussed the Legal Alliance. He mentioned that the alliance provides legal clinics in Anchorage and Matanuska-Susitna (Mat-Su) which have helped serve 85 veterans since January 2016. The veterans served by the clinics are unable to pay for legal fees and need legal services. Pro bono attorneys across the state offer these services to veterans. He expressed his gratitude for the legal alliance's service to the board. He added that there has been support for the National Guard and the reserve to train attorneys on the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act of 1994 (USERRA) law, so that the attorneys are able to assist those called on active duty after they come back with any issues with employment.

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MR. BOWEN launched slide 9 addressing the Faith Alliance, which is partnered with the Chaplains within the National Guard and the Partners in Care program. The alliance networks civilian faith communities to the military community within and near their congregations. It also provides emergency services to military personnel in need, such as: food pantries, conflict resolution, and counseling.

MR. BOWEN explained that the clergy are some of the front-line forces for individuals with PTSD to get assistance. The chaplains of the National Guard can train clergy throughout the state on how to best help a veteran with PTSD.

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REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER asked if the military encourages active duty members to be involved in a faith community. He asked if it is mandatory or encouraged.

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MR. BOWEN answered that there is nothing mandatory about attending chapel. He explained that within the military, chaplains are assigned different units, and they provide health and well-being for service members. He said, "It is not uncommon to be on a battlefield somewhere and have a chaplain show up with a bag of candy." He offered his understanding that it is mandatory for the chaplains to visit with service members. He reiterated that military people are not forced to go to chapel, but it is one program within active duty and the National Guard that is easily identified by military service members.

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MS. THOMPSON added that the chaplains are pretty much the only people from whom active service members can obtain initial counseling that is completely confidential. Because of that, many soldiers and airmen do use the chaplain in that form.

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER asked if there are any studies of correlation between participation in a faith community and levels of PTSD.

MS. THOMPSON conveyed that there are [correlations]. She offered her understanding that as a marriage and family therapist, a belief in a higher power usually gives more resiliency and coping strategies for individuals.

[1:27:19 PM](#)

CHAIR TUCK expressed that HB 100, in the House Health and Social Services Committee, would bring awareness of PTSD and would establish a PTSD Day on June 27. He stated that awareness is important. He described that it is important to try to see where the faith-based [involvement] helps in recovery.

[1:28:07 PM](#)

MR. BOWEN moved to slide 10, regarding the Child & Youth Alliance, which holds meetings once a month and "Family Nights" with the Alaska National Guard. The alliance offers

information, referral services, and collaboration in obtaining grants to serve military families. To date, the alliance has provided \$28,250 to support 4-H programs for the military youth. He stated that the greatest thing is seeing a child - whose parent is deployed - at any military installation, because anybody standing close to the child is called "Mom" or "Dad." He remarked, "Because if the individual is deployed, that's something that the child readily identifies with." He emphasized the importance of caring for those children as those family members are deployed and finding ways for those children to release the stressors they have. He indicated that the impact [of those stressors] may show up in the form of behavioral issues.

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MS. THOMPSON added that she is very proud of the active teen council in the National Guard, which is made of teens who have parents currently serving in the National Guard. The teens recently told Commissioner [Laurie] Hummel their plans and goals for the program. Ms. Thompson noted that a recent cultural exchange program held in Bethel allowed some teen council members a chance to see and experience Western Alaska and to meet children of other guard members. She said the event was amazing. She said that when the children in Bethel learned about the event, the group went from about 15 to 42 kids. She stated that the teen council members, who were mostly from Anchorage and Fairbanks, learned how to cut fish and pick berries. They made blueberry pie, which they took to elders in the community, and they also cleaned up the cemetery. She emphasized that the program's goals were for the teens to help the community and learn about the culture. She informed the committee that another similar event is planned for this year.

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CHAIR TUCK stated that the "Parents and Teachers" program in Fairbanks is very active on the military bases. He noted that the "Home for Heroes" program has weekly parent meetings and a monthly meeting with all the families involved in the Parents and Teachers program. He indicated that this effort ended up being a kind of support group for the deployed families. He said there is more funding for pre-K in the education budget this year, and he hopes that the military uses it. He remarked:

I know that when the military had cut it back for a little while from federal money, ... when we were able

to make it back up with state money, you were able to see ... the night and day difference between having the program and not having the program. So, hopefully we can get that going for you.

1:32:30 PM

MR. BOWEN drew attention to the coalition's web site: forgetmenotcoalition.org. He explained that the website provides: resources for service providers for hiring veterans; employment services for service members, veterans, and family members; and a calendar of events throughout the state. He indicated that there is a big problem across the nation, which is that many people are doing wonderful things, but the people who need help sometimes don't [hear about what is available]. He said if service providers are not able to reach people through the calendar, then they can call the coalition, and the coalition will reach out to people in [the service providers'] communities.

MR. BOWEN summarized that the coalition offers many services for military families and has great value. He stated that he and Ms. Thompson have strategized ways to keep the program going and are applying for any available grants. He offered his belief that the program has been blessed by the many people who have offered to help by signing three-year agreements to participate, including Chancellor Dean Case. He noted that the coalition started about five years ago. Mr. Bowen said that Magen James knows the most about the programs, has been one of the biggest advocates for the coalition to date, and has written most of the agreements, work requirements, and alliances.

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MS. THOMPSON added that Ms. James works for "Army OneSource," which is funded by the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) and, unfortunately, [won't exist any longer] nationwide, as of August. She explained that the work that Ms. James currently does for the coalition will fall to Ms. Thompson and Mr. Bowen. She expressed that they have a lot ahead and they are looking for partners within the coalition to step up and provide some of the services currently fulfilled by Ms. James.

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REPRESENTATIVE PARISH asked Ms. James whether the discontinuation of the program is a foregone conclusion.

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MAGEN JAMES, State Community Support Coordinator, Army OneSource, responded that as a frontline employee for Armed Forces Services Corporation, which holds the contract for Army OneSource, she has been told it is a foregone conclusion. She stated that the program manager, Ms. Yvonne Glover, has been asking for feedback from community members on how the elimination of Army OneSource will affect the activities and community collaborations. She added that if the committee members would like to submit feedback to the program manager, they can e-mail her, and she will forward those e-mails to Ms. Glover. She said Ms. Glover is actively working to keep the Secretary of Defense, the VA Secretary, and the U.S. Department of the Army updated on the community pulse regarding the elimination of the program.

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REPRESENTATIVE REINBOLD commended Ms. James for doing a great job and for the choice for the name of the coalition. She expressed that it was a privilege to hear the presentation, and she described Ms. James' having brought the book, Tears of a Warrior, as either serendipity or divine intervention, as people have been contacting her about PTSD.

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CHAIR TUCK said he received the book last year from Mr. Bowen at PTSI Day, and he characterized the book as being very valuable for families of returning heroes who have seen things people hope to never see. He agreed that the title of the coalition, forget me not, is appropriate for the organization. He noted that military personnel are doing great things to protect America and when they return home they are underrecognized. He explained that legislative citations are a good and appropriate way to recognize these hero's efforts for Alaska's neighborhoods, communities, and the country.

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REPRESENTATIVE PARISH asked what lines of support, other than Army OneSource, are presently provided to veterans - especially those dealing with PTSD or other injuries. He asked if Ms. James is expecting a discontinuation of any other lines of

support currently benefitting veterans, and he asked how the committee can prevent those discontinuations.

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MS. JAMES answered that the Army OneSource program does not offer direct services, but rather it connects organizations to ensure collaboration and build relationships. She expressed that a lot of federal programs are "feeling the pinch," but she is unaware of any other programs that are expected to be cut. She maintained that is a good thing for service members. She characterized that the beauty of the coalition is that it is all about collaboration: if one organization is unable to take on a pro-bono case, another organization can help. She put forth that the coalition may have a few "bumps in the road" with the elimination of the Army OneSource program, but the coalition's strength lies in the 150 partners across the state.

MS. JAMES stated that the partners have worked together for the last five years to provide amazing quantitative outcomes, and with Mr. Bowen and Ms. Thompson's leadership moving forward, the coalition will be fine. She assured that everyone involved must keep a pulse on what's happening with the federal government and trends with service members, veterans, and families. Doing so will allow the coalition to be prepared to proactively handle any emerging issues instead of reacting to situations. She expressed that with continued collaboration, awareness, and mutual support of programs, the coalition will be fine without the Army OneSource program.

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CHAIR TUCK thanked the coalition representatives for the presentation.

HB 165-STATE PERSONNEL ACT: VETERANS

[1:44:51 PM](#)

CHAIR TUCK announced that the final order of business would be HOUSE BILL NO. 165, "An Act relating to hiring for positions in state service based on substitution of military work experience or training for civilian work experience or training requirements."

[1:45:27 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE PARISH, as prime sponsor, presented HB 165. He pointed out that Alaska has more veterans per capita than any other state; more than 200 veterans return to the state every month. He stated that veterans report that finding a job is the main barrier to transitioning from military to civilian life. He stated that HB 165 would reduce the potential of veterans missing job opportunity that they are qualified to fill.

[1:46:18 PM](#)

ROBERT EDWARDSON, Staff, Representative Justin Parish, Alaska State Legislature, explained HB 165 to the committee, on behalf of Representative Parish, prime sponsor. He stated that the proposed bill would add to the State Personnel Act, which is found under AS 39.25.150. The proposed legislation would set procedures currently used by the Department of Administration for accepting the substitution of military knowledge, skills, and abilities as qualifying for state classified positions to meet minimum qualifications. The bill would also allow the Department of Administration to establish a procedure or regulation to substitute military experience for minimum qualifications in some cases.

MR. EDWARDSON assessed that the bill would change the hiring process, which involves six separate stages for state classified services: recruitment, application, pre-interview screening, interviews, reference checks, and hiring. He explained that the first three stages are where veterans may be inadvertently chased away for some recruitments. An agency will advertise a vacant position, listing the requirements for the position, the desired traits and characteristics for the ideal applicant, and minimum qualifications. He expressed that a veteran may decide not to apply for a job because he/she feels that he/she does not meet the minimum qualifications, although he/she may have traits of an ideal candidate.

MR. EDWARDSON offered an example from his life as a 20-year coast guard veteran and a state hiring manager. He remarked:

Kate was a non-commissioned officer in the U.S. Coast Guard. As one of her collateral duties, Kate was required to be a law enforcement boarding officer. She attended the maritime law enforcement academy at the federal law enforcement training center in Charleston, South Carolina. She then completed ... a rigorous training process at her home unit, then

performed numerous cases a federal law enforcement officer.

What knowledge, skill, or ability did this collateral duty give to Kate? Well, in school, ... in her duty, she would have learned authority and jurisdiction in general: how laws, regulations, policies, and procedures, and that sort of thing relate to the overall framework of government interaction and government intervention into people's lives. She would have ... learned defensive tactics and the use of force, which ... isn't just dressing up in the red gear and beating each other up. You learn to maintain effective working relationships - officer presence, just how you present yourself, without speaking verbal commands - and clear communication. She'd learn criminal investigation, which for many state jobs would correspond to research techniques, writing protocols, and independent adjudications for a lot of the different departments ... [wherein] people apply for ... permits or they apply for some sort of consideration somewhere. People who've had this experience would be ideal for that.

MR. EDWARDSON said part of being a law enforcement boarding officer is being an instructor, which requires effective written and oral communication and making presentations. He noted that he has been a manager in the Department of Natural Resources, and he compared the example to a Natural Resource Specialist II. He expressed that people like Kate would not qualify for the job; however, he offered his assessment that they would do very well in the job.

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MR. EDWARDSON stated that the bill would not take jobs away from non-veteran Alaskans, but would add otherwise qualified veterans to candidate pools to be interviewed. Currently, candidate pools have many highly qualified and capable non-veterans, and HB 165 would put veterans in the same hiring pool as other non-veterans. He stated that there is a zero fiscal note from the Department of Administration. He said that regulations would be required. He conveyed that the committee has helped make transition easier for veterans by filling gaps in law, and he added that HB 165 would fill another gap. He urged the committee to support the proposed legislation.

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REPRESENTATIVE LEDOUX said that the bill looks familiar, and she asked if a similar bill had been introduced previously.

1:53:01 PM

REPRESENTATIVE PARISH answered, "Not to my knowledge."

MR. EDWARDSON responded that there is a legislative research report [included in the committee packet], which loosely summarizes related legislation. He proffered that HB 2 had already been through the committee this year, and three years ago a Senate bill assisted military members regarding professional licensing.

REPRESENTATIVE LEDOUX concluded that the Senate bill is what she was thinking of.

1:53:40 PM

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER asked if there is anything that currently prevents a veteran from having his/her military experience counted in an application.

MR. EDWARDSON answered that the Division of Personnel currently follows [Standard Operating Procedure] (SOP) 04, which allows people to use their military experience to meet minimum qualifications. He offered his understanding that SOP 04 does not allow people to substitute military experience for qualifications.

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER asked what documentation is used to verify or document the military training a veteran has received.

MR. EDWARDSON answered that there are a number of different documents for different services. There are requirements for filing systems, both paper and electronic, to keep training records. He explained that within the Coast Guard, there is an "administrative remark sheet 3307," which supervisors often use to document certain types of experience - both good and bad. He added that awards can be used as documentation.

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER asked whether the administrative remark sheet 3307 is a state or military form.

MR. EDWARDSON answered that it is a Coast Guard form found in the Pay, Personnel, and Procedures manual.

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER offered his understanding that DoD has worked to address this issue and has tried to improve service records for the military resume to make them more transferable and comprehensible to civilian employers. He asked if that effort has had its desired effect.

MR. EDWARDSON responded that other than in times of war, the Coast Guard falls under the Department of Homeland Security, not DoD directives. He said that over the years there have been several "plain language" writing guides to reduce the use of [military] jargon and acronyms.

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REPRESENTATIVE SPOHNHOLZ asked whether the intention of HB 165 is to ensure that transferrable military experience and skills can substitute for minimum qualifications in applying for state jobs.

MR. EDWARDSON answered that is one of the goals. He explained that the Department of Administration currently uses a standard operation system that allows people to use military credit to meet minimum qualifications; the proposed bill would set this practice as law instead of policy, making it unchangeable by policy decisions. He added that the intent of the bill is to allow applicable military experience to substitute for minimum qualifications.

REPRESENTATIVE SPOHNHOLZ stated that she supports the intent of the proposed bill to ensure that transferable skills are recognized as important. She commented that there have been clear examples in the past of translation problems, and she emphasized the importance of ensuring that military experience is translated in a way that is understandable to people in civilian management. She explained that she has tried to decode what someone's experience in the military meant in a civilian context. She stated that the task can be challenging. She mentioned that she wants to make sure that HB 165 would not allow "seat time" in a non-related field to substitute for actual relevant skills and experience. She asked whether Mr. Edwardson is confident that the substitution of skills would not qualify a person for a job for which he/she might not have the skills.

MR. EDWARDSON responded that first draft of the bill contained "more meat" than the draft by Legislative Legal and Research Services, which he claimed is the superior version. He remarked:

The way that it's drafted allows the professionals - the Department of ... Administration, Division of Personnel - to set those policies, to write those regulations. And I think they would probably be the better ones to answer how you would avoid doing that, [to] ... make sure that it is ... authentic experience.

MR. EDWARDSON said that after working with the Coast Guard for 22.5 years, he affirmed that the record keeping is rigorous. He conveyed that research and documentation is not "puffed up." He said, "Does it happen? Perhaps, but I think it would be pretty rare."

[2:00:39 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE PARISH added that the bill stipulates that the military experience or training should meet or exceed the position requirements. He stated that merely being present would not be adequate, unless mere presence were the initial requirement.

MR. EDWARDSON said that the school mentioned in a previous example gives "ace credits." He explained that the schools often have third parties verify the authenticity and rigor of experience.

[2:01:44 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SPOHNHOLZ clarified that she is not concerned that people in the military are not earning authentic experience or that there would be inflation of the experience in the records. She explained that her concern is that the experience is clarified and relevant [to the job].

[2:02:04 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE LEDOUX asked if "seat time" means that a person was present and sitting on a seat.

REPRESENTATIVE SPOHNHOLZ clarified that she used the term "seat time" to refer to the time a person worked or served in the

military, but not [to refer to] the quality or characterization of the work.

REPRESENTATIVE LEDOUX pointed out that the statute talks about a veteran or a former prisoner of war. She asked how someone could be a prisoner of war and not be a veteran.

[2:03:24 PM](#)

MR. EDWARDSON noted that it is written that way multiple times within the State Personnel Act.

REPRESENTATIVE LEDOUX repeated her question.

[2:03:42 PM](#)

DAN WAYNE, Attorney, Legislative Legal Counsel, Legislative Legal and Research Services, answered that he doesn't think a person could be a prisoner of war and not a veteran.

[2:04:05 PM](#)

CHAIR TUCK proposed that a contract employee with DoD could be a prisoner of war.

[2:04:41 PM](#)

VERDIE BOWEN, Director of Veterans Affairs, Office of Veteran Affairs, Department of Military & Veterans' Affairs (DMVA) responded that it is possible to be a prisoner of war without being a veteran. He pointed out that when all the family members and civilians that were held by the Japanese during World War II were released from captivity, they were eligible for the "defense of the Philippines medal" and were provided prisoner of war status and rights.

[2:05:22 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE LEDOUX offered her understanding that international treaties do not allow making a prisoner of war work. She asked how a prisoner of war could develop experience as a prisoner of war without working.

MR. BOWEN offered his understanding that the experience would come before or after their prisoner of war status. He said that a lot of things are written in international treaties that are violated when people become prisoners of war. He remarked, "We

don't have to go far back in time, we could just go to the Hanoi Hilton and think of what those prisoners of war went through during their time there." He mentioned his belief that after the first gulf war there were prisoners of war. He offered his recollection of seeing a female major speak before the U.S. Senate about the issues she experienced during her time in captivity. He explained that there had been expeditious violations of the Geneva Convention.

REPRESENTATIVE LEDOUX conveyed her belief that prisoners of war have gone through horrendous experiences. She questioned whether those experiences translate to civilian jobs.

MR. BOWEN responded that he would not know how to translate that experience either.

[2:07:33 PM](#)

CHAIR TUCK announced that HB 165 was held over.

[2:08:04 PM](#)

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the committee, the House Special Committee on Military and Veterans' Affairs meeting was adjourned at 2:08 p.m.